

The Moray Eels Eat the Holy Modal Rounders

(Elektra Records, 1968, reissued 2002 on Water Records)

by Peter Stone Brown

The Holy Modal Rounders were a '60s folk duo, Peter Stampfel, vocals, fiddle and banjo and Steve Weber, vocals and guitar. They explored and revived old time mountain music and occasionally delved into blues, performing in a manic style that often was downright hysterical. One of their primary sources was Charlie Poole, a well known North Carolina singer in the '20s. Stampfel channeled Charlie Poole, singing like a Charlie Poole 78 complete with the scratches.

As folk drifted to rock, they joined the Fugs, left, hooked up with drummer Sam Shepard, yes *the* Sam Shepard, made a record and broke up. Stampfel formed a new group the Moray Eels. Frazier Mohawk signed the Rounders to Elektra on Stampfel's stipulation that the Moray Eels were involved. In 1968, *The Moray Eels Eat The Holy Modal Rounders* appeared. The few who heard it knew this was a moment of singular insanity. The record had no separate tracks with songs colliding into one another. Though the instrumentation was simple, it sounded large. The songs were original and most dealt with drugs to an unprecedented extreme. Best appreciated in an enhanced state, the listener would wonder what amount and combination of drugs created this 30 minute hallucinatory experience. The answer was as much as possible, and all of them.